

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 EB-08 AID-05 MCT-01 EUR-12
ACDA-07 DEAE-00 SNM-02 DHA-02 OES-06 TRSE-00 /112 W
-----250946Z 105734 /17

R 250835Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1445
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 8879

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, AS

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK'S VISIT TO THAILAND

SUMMARY. AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREW PEACOCK VISITED THAILAND APRIL 16-21, DURING WHICH TIME HE CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER THANIN, FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT, GENERAL KRIANGSAK, ADMIRAL SA-NGAT AND HIS MAJESTY THE KING. PEACOCK ALSO HEADED AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO OPENING OF ESCAP GENERAL CONFERENCE AND HELPED DEDICATE AUSTRALIAN-FINANCED LOMASK-CHUMPHAE HIGHWAY IN NORTHERN THAILAND. PEACOCK'S ACTIVITIES RECEIVED DAILY PRESS ATTENTION, AND AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF FELT VISIT HAD BEEN WORTHWHILE INTRODUCTION FOR THAI OFFICIALS AND PEACOCK ALIKE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING APRIL 16-21 VISIT BY AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK TO THAILAND, CONVERSATIONS WERE HELD WITH FOLLOWING THAI OFFICIALS, INFORMATION ABOUT WHICH WAS PROVIDED BY AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF.

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2. PRIME MINISTER THANIN - THAILAND'S SECURITY IS THREATENED BY FIVE FACTORS -- COMMUNISM, NARCOTICS, CORRUPTION, ABUSE OF AUTHORITY AND POVERTY. COMMUNIST TERRORISM COULD BE HANDLED BY RTG IF IT WERE DOMESTIC PROBLEM ONLY. HOWEVER, THAILAND'S 9000 CTS RECEIVED "FULL SUPPORT" FROM CHINA, USSR, VIET-NAM, LAOS AND CAMBODIA, BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY. THAILAND FACED LONG, DRAWN-OUT CONFLICT, BUT WOULD NOT COMPROMISE WITH COMMUNISTS

WHOSE ONLY DESIRE IS WORLD DOMINATION. RTG HAS RECEIVED EXCELLENT COOPERATION FROM MALAYSIANS IN SOUTH, BUT IN OTHER AREAS TROOPS WERE STRETCHED THIN, NECESSITATING TRAINING OF VILLAGE SELF DEFENSE UNITS WHICH, THANIN ESTIMATED, WOULD TAKE A YEAR TO COMPLETE. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE WAS ALSO AN IMPORTANT PART OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY, AND RTG WOULD NEXT MONTH LAUNCH A SPECIAL PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES TO "EDUCATE THE WHOLE NATION" ON INCOMPATIBILITY OF COMMUNISM WITH THAI LIFE. RE NARCOTICS, THANIN SAID THAILAND SUFFERED BECAUSE ONE PERCENT OF POPULATION IS ADDICTED, (I.E., ABOUT 400,000 ADDICTS), AND IN 1976 36 PERCENT OF THAILAND'S CRIME WAS NARCOTICS RELATED. AS A TRAF-FICKING COUNTRY, THAILAND FACED GRAVE DIFFICULTIES; CORRUPT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND POLICE WERE INVOLVED AND WOULD HAVE TO BE REMOVED. WHILE CORRUPTION AMONG OFFICIALS WAS ONE PROBLEM, SO WAS CORRUPTION IN BUSINESS WORLD. CORRUPT BUSINESSMEN HAD, FOR EXAMPLE, BEEN INVOLVED IN MAR 26 COUP ATTEMPT BECAUSE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES WERE HAMPERING DISHONEST ACTIVITIES. ABUSE OF AUTHORITY THANIN DESCRIBED AS DICTATORIAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE BUREAUCRACY. POVERTY WAS NOT EXTREME IN THAILAND, BUT STANDARD OF LIVING NEEDED TO BE RAISED AND WAS THREATENED BY SUCH EVENTS AS OIL PRICE INCREASES. GOVERNMENT WAS CONCENTRATING ON VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT IN ORDER TO GIVE RURAL PEOPLE "SENSE OF BELONGING." ASKED HOW RTG MADE POLICIES KNOWN TO THE POPULACE, THANIN SAID "RADIO AND TELEVISION ARE OURS", BUT NEWSPAPERS WERE A PROBLEM, SO RTG WOULD BE ESTABLISHING ITS OWN NEWSPAPER WHICH IT WOULD TELL PEOPLE TO HEED ABOVE ALL OTHERS. THANIN REFERRED TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT, SAYING THAT HE HAD PENDING BEFORE HIM 70 APPLICATIONS REPRESENTING ABOUT 5000 MILLION BAHT (\$250 MILLION), BUT BEFORE HE GAVE APPROVAL HE

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WANTED TO BE CERTAIN THAILAND WAS "STABILIZED" POLITICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY. RE FOREIGN RELATIONS, THANIN REITERATED THAILAND'S DESIRE FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA AND CONCERNS ABOUT INTENTIONS OF VIET-NAM, PRAISED ASEAN AS ENHANCING A REGIONAL FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS, AND SAID HE WASN'T HAPPY WITH THE IMPRESSION HE HAS GAINED THAT THE U.S. WOULD LIKE JAPAN TO LOOK AFTER SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE ALSO DIDN'T LIKE THE PROSPECT OF JAPAN AND THE U.S. HAVING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH VIET-NAM. ASKED ABOUT EMPHASIS OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THANIN SAID IT WAS "ALL RIGHT", BUT AMERICANS ADORED FREEDOM AND FREEDOM SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS AN END BUT RATHER AS A MEANS. FREEDOM IN TIMES OF CONFLICT HAD TO BE CONTROLLED IN ORDER TO REACH THE TRUE END, HAPPINESS. THANIN CONCLUDED WITH THE COMMENT THAT THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW WAS A "COMPLETELY COMMUNIST PAPER."

3. FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT - AFTER PRESENTING A LENGTHY RATIONALE FOR THE OCT 6 MILITARY TAKEOVER, UPPADIT SAID THAT THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY HAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS ITS BASIS. THAILAND HELD TO THE AUGUST COMMUNIQUE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH VIET-NAM

AND HAD INVITED VIETNAMESE TO BANGKOK TO TALK. VIETNAMESE HAD REPLIED THAT TALKING SHOULD BE DONE IN VIENTIANE. RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA WERE MAINTAINED AT A VERY LOW LEVEL ON BOTH SIDES. UPPADIT SAID HE HAD ASKED CHINESE AMBASSADOR FOR HELP IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA AND THOUGHT AMBASSADOR HAD FORWARDED REQUEST TO PEKING, BUT CHINA AND ITS AMBASSADOR REMAINED NON-COMMITTAL. RELATIONS WITH CHINA HAD DETERIORATED A BIT AFTER OCT 6, AND REMAINED COOL THOUGH CORRECT. THAILAND CONSIDERED RELATIONS WITH CHINA IMPORTANT AS COUNTER-BALANCE TO SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. UPPADIT SAW NO PROBLEM WITH U.S. NORMALIZING ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA AS LONG AS TRADE WITH TAIWAN COULD CONTINUE. HE CONSIDERED U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA AS SIGN U.S. LOSING INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. UPPADIT SAID WASHINGTON SHOULD NOT THINK ITS INTEREST IN JAPAN WAS SUFFICIENT TO THE AREA; U.S. SHOULD REALIZE IT HAS INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS WELL. PEACOCK REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT AUSTRALIA DOES NOT SEE ITSELF AS PART OF ANY "JAPAN-AUSTRALIA CONFIDENTIAL

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AXIS." (NOTE: AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF COMMENTED THAT AUSTRALIA HAS ENOUGH DIFFICULTY ESTABLISHING ITS CREDENTIALS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WITHOUT BEING TAINTED BY JAPAN'S REPUTATION.) UPPADIT WENT ON TO EXPRESS HIS DESIRE THAT U.S. BASES REMAIN IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THAT THE MANILA PACT BE MAINTAINED.

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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4. PMAC SECRETARY-GENERAL KRIANGSAK - ASKED ABOUT THAI REACTION TO U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA, KRIANGSAK SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT REPERCUSSIONS FOR JAPAN AND FUTURE OF KOREA SHOULD THE OTHER SIDE DECIDE TO GIVE MILITARY SUPPORT TO DPRK. EVEN THOUGH STEP BY STEP WITHDRAWAL OVER 4 TO 5 YEAR PERIOD WAS ACCEPTABLE, PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON OTHER ASIANS WOULD BE THAT U.S. HAD LOST INTEREST IN THE AREA, ESPECIALLY IF KOREAN WITHDRAWAL WERE LINKED TO RENEGOTIATION OF BASES IN RP. PEACOCK EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET MOVES IN SOUTH PACIFIC, A MATTER U.S. WAS ALSO PREPARED TO KEEP UNDER REVIEW. KRIANGSAK RAISED SUBJECT OF SEATO AND WONDERED ABOUT STATUS OF MANILA PACT. PEACOCK REPLIED THAT AUSTRALIA REGARDED IT AS STILL IN EXISTENCE BUT OF QUESTIONABLE EFFECTIVENESS. KRIANGSAK SAID THAILAND CONTINUED TO TEST THE REACTIONS OF THE U.S. SPOKESMAN REGARDING INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, IMPLYING THAT RTG WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOME REVERSAL OF AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THAILAND. PEACOCK COMMENTED THAT AFTER BEING ASKED TO LEAVE BY THAILAND'S PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, U.S. WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME CONVINCING ITS PEOPLE A REVERSAL OF THAT DECISION WAS WORTHWHILE. ONE LESSON OF VIET-NAM WAS THAT FOREIGN POLICY MUST HAVE DOMESTIC SUPPORT. KRIANGSAK SAID THAILAND COULD CONTAIN ITS INSURGENCY AND WOULD CONTINUE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO FIGHT COMMUNISM AT HOME WHILE PURSUING CO-EXISTENCE ABROAD. CAMBODIA CONTINUED TO BE A PROBLEM FOR THAILAND (NOT EVEN THE USSR COULD SET FOOT INSIDE CAMBODIA), BUT THAILAND WAS NOT SUPPORTING ANTI-COMMUNIST LAO OR CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE GROUPS. SUCH GROUPS HAD AMPLE MANPOWER AND WEAPONS. KRIANGSAK SAID THAT TRAINING FOR THAI OFFICERS IN AUSTRALIA HAD BEEN EFFECTIVE; WHAT WOULD BE USEFUL NOW WOULD BE AUSTRALIAN TRAINING IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS TECHNIQUES, ESPECIALLY FOR LOWER ECHELON OFFICERS.

5. DEFENSE MINISTER SA-NGAT - ADMIRAL SA-NGAT EXPLAINED MEASURES THE PRESENT RTG HAS TAKEN FOR THE COUNTRY'S SECURITY SUCH AS INAUGURATING THE VILLAGE SELF-DEFENSE PROGRAM, BUILDING UP THE MILITARY TO FULL STRENGTH, TAKING BEFORE THE PEOPLE A FIRM STAND AGAINST INSURGENCY, ALLOCATING SUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR THE MILITARY, AND SEEKING ALTERNATIVES TO DEPENDENCE ON U.S. FOR EQUIPMENT. (HE NOTED THAT RED TAPE INVOLVED IN FMS PROGRAM LED TO DELAYS OF 8 TO 18 MONTHS BEFORE DELIVERY OF EQUIPMENT.) SA-NGAT SAID THAILAND'S MAIN CONCERN WAS INDOCHINA, AND THE RTG'S DEFENSE STRATEGY FOCUSSED OVERWHELMINGLY ON THAT AREA.

6. THE KING - CALL ON HIS MAJESTY WAS PRIMARILY PROTOCOL GESTURE. KING SPOKE OF HIS CONCERN ABOUT THAILAND'S SECURITY. PEACOCK EXTENDED INVITATION FOR CROWN PRINCE TO MAKE RETURN VISIT TO AUSTRALIA. (PEACOCK ALSO INVITED PRIME MINISTER THANIN TO VISIT).

7. AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF SAID HE FELT VISIT HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL AS AN INTRODUCTION OF PEACOCK TO THAI LEADERS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACOCK TO EXPLORE THAI ATTITUDES AND CONCERNS. ACCORDING TO AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF PEACOCK WAS PARTICULARLY STRUCK WITH EXTREME ANTI-COMMUNIST ATTITUDES HELD BY THANIN AND IMPORTANCE THAI ATTACH TO SECURITY THREAT THEY BELIEVE VIET-NAM REPRESENTS. HE WAS ALSO REPORTEDLY IMPRESSED BY APPARENT LACK OF INTEREST SHOWN BY THAI TOWARD ASEAN -- EVERYBODY PAID IT LIP SERVICE, BUT THERE SEEMED A LACK OF REAL PURPOSE TOWARD THE ORGANIZATION WHEN COMPARED WITH REACTIONS PEACOCK HAD OBSERVED IN VISITS TO OTHER ASEAN MEMBER STATES.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Subject: AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK'S VISIT TO THAILAND SUMMARY. AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREW PEACOCK VISITED THAILAND APRIL 16-21, DURING WHICH TIME HE CALLED
TAGS: PFOR, TH, AS, (PEACOCK, ANDREW)
To: STATE
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vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a6e016a0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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